

# Thailand FETP

## Background and Goals

In 1980, the Thailand Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), established the first Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) outside of North America. The goals of the program are to enhance human capacity for disease surveillance, response, investigation, and control in Thailand and neighboring countries.

In 1998, the program expanded its mission to strengthen regional capacity in field epidemiology by accepting trainees from neighboring countries and regions, including Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Southern China, and Vietnam.

In 2001, WHO designated the Thailand FETP as a WHO Collaborating Center for Field Epidemiology Training and Research. In 2006, CDC provided a technical advisor to act as regional consultant to the FETP and to provide technical assistance in the development of new FETPs in neighboring countries. The Thailand FETP is well-sustained and well-anchored within the MOPH and receives its full support. FETP alumni occupy prominent positions at the MOPH and at other health organizations. Most graduates (87%) still work for the MOPH while others work at WHO, the Global Fund, and UNAIDS.

## Program Achievements

During its long history, the FETP has performed scores of outbreak investigations and dealt with a multitude of high-priority public health issues. Some of the more notable investigations include the avian influenza outbreak and the response to the Asian tsunami, both in 2004.

Since its inception, the program has helped create and set up numerous public health surveillance systems in Thailand, including one for legionellosis.

The program has made a lasting impact in the area of HIV/AIDS surveillance. In 1988, FETP trainees conducted a survey whose results suggested that HIV infection rates were increasing in Thailand. These efforts eventually



Between 1980 and 2009, the Thailand FETP has successfully trained 29 cohorts and graduated 179 field epidemiologists (148 from Thailand and 31 from neighboring countries).

informed the country's now famous 100% condom campaign and helped prevent between 4.7 and 5 million infections. Thailand currently has an HIV infection surveillance system in a third of its provinces.

The FETP led the initiation of new surveillance strategies to rapidly detect emerging diseases and health threats by setting up and training more than 1,000 Surveillance and Rapid Response Teams throughout the country.

FETP trainees and graduates have detected several new avian influenza cases nationwide by reviewing clinical signs and symptoms, which were subsequently confirmed by the Thai National Institute of Health and other reference laboratories. In August 2009, the program helped create the South Asia Epidemiology and Technology Network Inc. (SAFETYNET) which aims to provide technical support to a larger number of countries in the region. SAFETYNET also aims to strengthen the capacity of Mekong Basin countries (Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam) to initiate an appropriate response to control and prevent disease outbreaks.

### Program Impact

Many of the outbreaks investigated by FETP trainees led to public health policy changes:

- Two botulism outbreaks led to the creation of a national and regional emergency response center and the creation of an antitoxin stockpile,
- Investigations of severe Hand Foot and Mouth disease led to the establishment of a new surveillance system and isolation of the Enterovirus 71 strain previously unknown in Thailand,
- Investigations of endemic *Streptococcus suis* cases led to enhanced surveillance, early detection of a new outbreak, and laboratory training, and
- A legionellosis outbreak led to a change in water treatment in Phuket and early detection of a second outbreak in Pattaya.



### Program Plans

To stay abreast of the changing nature of global disease detection, the program is expanding in several directions by accomplishing the following:

- Participating in the human resource capacity component of the Mekong Basin Disease Surveillance Network to strengthen the epidemiological capacity of each country in the network,
- Including veterinarians into the program and enhancing its curriculum in the area of veterinary medicine, and
- Starting a junior fellowship program to enable managers to learn how to supervise others during outbreaks, develop curricula, and deliver lectures.

## Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Center for Global Health

Division of Public Health Systems and Workforce Development  
1600 Clifton Road, N.E., Mailstop E-93 • Atlanta, Georgia 30333, USA  
[www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/fetp](http://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/fetp) • Tel: 404-639-3210 • Fax: 404-639-4617